

A "Happy" New Year

By Mrs. Charles C. Marble.

IN a comfortable cottage on a back street of a country town Johnny Wallace and his little sister May lived with their parents, one of whom ill-deserved the name. While yet little more than a toddling babe, Johnny had learned what the uncertain footsteps of his father often meant, and instantly his gay laughter ceased, and hurriedly would he put away the poor remnant of toys which Santa Claus had dropped the year before while on his way to more favored households. At least that was the way the little fellow accounted for the broken toys, which, between you and me, some thoughtful neighbor had sent in to the worse than father's little Johnny. Afterward, when a wee little sister came to share his wants and pleasures, he guarded her also from his father's tempests of anger as well as his frail little body would admit.

The day before the Christmas of which I write the mother listened with an aching heart to the prattle of her children as they each recounted the gifts which they hoped Santa Claus would bring to them—sled and doll, skates and mittens, toys and candies—and the poor mother, looking at their worn and faded clothing, their much mended stockings and shabby shoes, wished in her heart that Christmas day might never dawn upon their disappointed hopes, that her own and her dear ones' eyelids might not open upon the joy and gladness of a day so gloomy to them. Night had fallen, and the mother, dreading to hear that reeling footstep, had early prepared the little ones for bed, and now with them on her lap sat before the kitchen window, the room lit by no rays save those of the stars.

Just above them the evening star twinkled and glittered in the deep blue of the heavens, and to the thoughtful boy it seemed to be a diamond upon the brow of a shadowy angel, a diamond which might be sent to him by Santa Claus, could he but call loud enough for the angel to hear.

"Maybe I ain't good enough," he sighed, remembering the well worn phrase of how children should win the good graces of that giver of gifts, and then, aloud, he asked: "Will Santa Claus come to our house to-night, mamma?"

"I'm afraid not," replied the hopeless mother, knowing full well where the week's wages would be spent.

"I know why he won't tum to our house," gravely announced May.

"Why?" queried Johnny.

"'Tause papa gets drunk, and says bad words. Santy 'Taus never comes to bad folks' houses. Does he, mamma?"

The mother only pressed the dear head more closely to her swelling heart, and made no reply.

"Tell us, mamma," said Johnny, after a long pause, "all about the baby in the manger and the wise men, and the star what led 'em to—"

"Bethlehem!" supplied May.

And so the mother told again the simple story, ever beautiful, of how an angel of the Lord appeared to the wise men and bade them go and seek the young child, the Saviour; and how a star guided them to where the babe lay, and how the wise men worshiped Him and gave Him gifts of gold, and—and "other things," she added, choosing simpler words than the text.

"Other things," inwardly commented Johnny, resolving at once what those other things might mean.

"And does the Saviour come to—Bethlehem every Christmas, mamma," he asked, still gazing upon that twinkling star.

"Yes," she answered, abstractedly.

"'Tth the manger very, very far?" lisped May.

"Not very," sadly said the mother, feeling herself at that moment very near the Divine presence. "Not very, dear."

Thoughtful Johnny went to bed and before he slept he whispered to the little sister beside him what those "other things" were which the wise men brought as Christmas gifts to the babe in the stable, for what else could they be but toys and candies and all manner of good things?

"And a turkey," added May. "A dreat, dreat big turkey. Oh, my, I do wish papa was one of them wise men, don't you, Johnny?" But receiving no answer from Johnny, whose brain was busy with a new thought, the child was soon asleep.

At a late hour the father came home; his voice thick, his steps unsteady, ugly in temper; the noise of

whose coming awoke the sleeping children.

"I have been waiting up for you," gently said the patient mother; "for you know to-morrow is Christmas, and there is nothing much in the house to eat. And, oh, I had hoped you would think of our dear little ones and bring home your wages to-night that I might buy some little trifle to make them happy."

"Don't bother me about the children and Christmas, and such nonsense," he grumbled, crawling into bed just as he was. "I've only got a dime or so left, and I'll want that to-morrow myself." And muttering imprecations upon his wife and children and everything in general, the man fell asleep.

"Santy 'Taus won't never come while papa is so bad," lisped the drowsy May, with a sigh, which went to the very core of the listening Johnny's heart.

Late into the morning the miserable father slumbered, and when he at last did awake he lay there wondering at the deep stillness which reigned in the house. Again he fell into a gentle doze, his brain freed from the vapors of liquor by his long sleep.

It was high noon when he again opened his eyes, and still that oppressive quiet below stairs made him wonder.

"That was a strange dream," he muttered, uneasily, wiping the dew of fear from his brow. "How glad I was to see the faces of Johnny and May peering into that deep, black pit into which I had fallen. I can't remember how I ever got out, but I can feel their dear little hands in mine now," and with a new love in his heart, and a new light upon his face, the man descended to the kitchen.

But no wife, no children, were anywhere to be seen.

"Gone to some neighbors," he thought, filled with a disappointment most keen as he gazed from the windows into the noisy street.

"Merry 'Trismas," cried several happy-faced urchins, as they caught sight of him. "Merry 'Trismas, Mr. Wallace; where's Johnny?"

The father shook his head, moodily, and sat down by the fireless stove.

"Where's Johnny?"

How the letters seemed to start out before him, no matter where he looked. How they danced upon the walls, over the floor, among the shadows, in the sunlight. Every tin horn, blown by boyish lips, repeated the cry: "Where's Johnny?" and the man, filled with a nameless foreboding, recalled the manly little fellow's reproachful looks, his loving care of the wee sister, and upon his big, brawny hand dropped a tear of which he was not ashamed.

"I wish to-morrow were Christmas," he said, aloud, with a sudden pang, as he thought of other men's children to whom had come lavish gifts, whose shouts of joy reached him in that solitary, comfortless room; men who earned no more than he, nor capable of earning so much. "I wish to-morrow were Christmas, and I hadn't spent all my money in the tavern, 'd—" he broke off as the vision presented itself of that tavern, warm and snug, with its whiffs of egg-nog, of something "hot" and good, and in that thought all others were forgotten as he arose and put on his hat, feeling the need of something to sustain his weakened stomach and shaken nerves.

As he fumbled in his pocket for a bit of change, the bartender said, carelessly: "They have been found, I suppose, Mr. Wallace?"

"They? Who do you mean?" asked the other as carelessly, as his nervous hand closed about the glass before him.

"Why, your children, Johnny and May," replied the bartender, in some surprise. "Somebody told me your wife has been searching for them since awhile after daylight."

"Since daylight?" repeated Mr. Wallace, pushing the glass from him with a shudder. "Since daylight, while I have been sleeping off the effects of such cursed stuff as that. May God forgive me if aught has happened to my little ones!"

"Well!" muttered the bartender, as he looked after the retreating figure of his one-time best customer. "I'll warrant he'll be coming back before night to get this glass of liquor, so I'll just set it by."

Aye, set it by, Mr. Bartender, set it by, but its aroma will have departed, its strength be gone, its power to do evil forever fled, e'er remorse shall have ceased to do its work upon that awakened father.

For the first time in years the thoughts of that hurrying man penetrated the smiling sky above him, the genial warmth of the noontide sun, the moving panorama of the blushing clouds, and he wondered, with a dull pain at his heart, if a prayer from a creature so vile as he would be heard and heeded by the Great Helper beyond Christmas! and for the first time for years the tender significance of the word penetrated his dull senses, and he felt, with a glad thrill, that the One who could help was once a poor babe born in a stable, a lowly carpenter, a man of infinite sorrows, acquainted with direst grief, and that thought brought him near unto Him; confidence took the place of doubt, and, with a heart torn by new emotions, strange and sweet, he hurried to his miserable home.

"They may be within," whispered

Hope, as he opened the door, and that hope redoubled as his eyes fell upon his wife sitting in front of the newly-kindled fire, but that hope vanished when she turned upon him her stony face, her anguished eyes.

"I have inquired at every house," she said, wearily, in answer to his breathless question, "but no one has seen our darlings."

The father could do nothing but groan.

At this juncture neighbors flocked in, kind neighbors laden with Christmas cheer for both body and mind. Wallace flushed as he ate the food thus provided, and loathed himself for robbing his home of food and every comfort. That day and another passed and no news of the lost children.

It was now the day before New Year's, and into the town came many farm wagons, driven by ruddy-faced, genial old farmers.

The season had been unusually mild and the first day of the new year bade fair to come in disguised under the mantle of spring.

"Hey, what do you say?" queried bluff old Farmer Brown, "a leetle gal and a boy lost from this yer town? Jest describe 'em, mister."

"Wall, I never, and it's from this here town they strayed," he continued, "and I've been a-lookin' in another direction, the little feller not knowin' the town he come from, but always p'intin' to the north."

"Well, well! Johnny and May."

"Yes, that's them!"

"Why, bless your soul, them little ones I found a-sleepin' snug ez snug could be among the hay on Christmas mornin'; and the first thing the boy says, says he: 'Is this Bethlehem, sir?' in jist the sweetest way imaginable."

"Bethlehem?" says I, struck all of a heap, forseein' as it was Christmas time I knowed right away what the boy was thinkin' on; so I says, says I:

"No, sonny, ez grave ez airy owl, 'this here ain't that holy place at all.'"

"Then come on, May," says the plucky little feller to the gal; 'we must hurry up or the wise men will have give all their gifts away before we get there.'

"What wise men be you lookin' fer?" says I, as though not comprehendin'. The little chap hesitated for a minute, and then says, he, a-wipin' the tears from his tired and hungry little sister's eyes, says he, confidin' like:

"We are goin' to see if the wise men won't give us some of the gifts, sir, what they bring to the young child in the manger every Christmas; some of the gold and other nice things. We weren't born in a manger, sir, says he, quite humble and mournful like, 'but we are as poor as He was, and father is so bad that Santa Claus won't come to our house, and—'"

The listener turned very pale and stifled the groan which arose to his lips.

"And so," the boy went on, 'May and me made up our minds to foller the star that had peeped into our window all that night; just like the star mamma said that moved on before the wise men, and so we got up real quiet, and out we went, and, sure enough, the star kept beckoning us on and on, and we walked and walked until all at once it growed dim and at last it went out, and May said it meant for us to stop just where we was, for that must be Bethlehem, and so we laid down in the barn, meannin' to go into the stable after restin' a bit to worship the young child, too.'"

Tears by this time streamed from the eyes of both men.

"My Johnny, my little May," cried the happy listener. "Thank God!"

"And what do you suppose they expected to find in the stable as gifts?" he asked of the farmer after a pause.

"Oh, they looked for a turkey to dinner, and a sled, and a beautiful tree all gold and silver, like one of their little neighbors always gets from Santa Claus, and a dolly, and massy only knows what else. They got all the turkey they wanted, you better believe," chuckled the old farmer, "and Johnny said if mamma had only been along he'd concluded it was just ez good ez Bethlehem, anyway."

And then Mr. Brown, after a little talk with the shame-faced father, dived into his pocket and brought out a well-filled wallet, and the next day when all the world were greeting each other with a "Happy New Year," Johnny and May stood in speechless delight before a tree upon which stretched gold and silver tinsel in great profusion, and at its base lay all the gifts which they had journeyed so far to ask of the wise men; but better than all were the loving words and kind looks from that father whom they had hitherto only feared; that father who held them in his strong arms, and called them God's New Year's gift to a repentant man.

'Tis the dawn of a New Year, indeed," sobbed the happy wife, as the husband asked a humble blessing upon the bountifully spread board at noon, "a happy dawning for thee and me and our little ones."—N. Y. Observer.

Sugar in Job Lots.

Wabash—Did you hear that fellow? He called his wife Sugar.

Dearborn—Yes; that's a favorite pet name of his. He's called every wife he's had Sugar.

For gracious sake! How many lumps has he had?—Yonkers Statesman.

SCHOOL AND CHURCH.

Last year \$3,300,000 was expended in Greater New York for the current expenses of Protestant churches. The increase in membership was 5,278.

In Cuba, under Spanish rule, the number of pupils in the schools did not exceed 30,000. At the present time 150,000 pupils are enrolled, under 3,600 teachers.

One-tenth of the Presbyterian home missionary force is at work among 32 tribes, while the annual expenditure for these wards of the nation amounts to about \$100,000.

It is related of Rev. Jotham Sewall, a missionary preacher of Maine, in the closing years of the last and the first half of this century that during his long life he preached 11,389 sermons in Maine and 1,204 in 11 other states.

Recent regulations issued by the governments of Belgium, Switzerland and Bavaria limiting the Sunday freight traffic have not lessened the receipts of the roads either in freight or revenue, says the Boston Congregationalist.

Andreas and Anton Lang visited the pope in Rome a few weeks ago in their Oberammergau costumes. Cardinal Rampolla introduced them. The pope received them very kindly, gave them golden medals and would not allow the impersonator of Christ to kneel before him.

Prof. DuBois, a negro alumnus of Harvard, and now a resident of Atlanta, Ga., has been able to find 2,414 negroes, including 235 women, who have taken degrees from institutions of every sort. So far as he could learn, all of these have been self-supporting, and letters from half of them report an average assessed valuation of real estate of \$2,500.

HONORING A GEOGRAPHER.

Lieut. Payer's Bad Luck in Naming Geographical Objects After Dr. Petermann.

Lieut. Julius Payer, of the Austro-Hungarian army, who, with Lieut. Carl Weyprecht, of that country's navy, made Franz-Josef Land known to the world, was a great admirer of the famous German geographer, Dr. A. Petermann. Petermann was an enthusiastic supporter of arctic exploration, and it was through reading his writings on this subject that Payer first became interested in polar researches and determined to engage in the work that made his name well known. It was therefore natural that Payer should attach the name of the German geographer to two of the discoveries he reported, which were regarded as among the most important features of his work, says the New York Sun.

When Payer went to the coast of East Greenland in 1870 with Koldey on the steamer Germania, the most important discovery they made was Franz-Josef Fiord and the mountain that stands near its head. Payer described the magnificence of the fiord, which he said was a combination of "huge walls, deep erosion fissures, wild peaks, mighty crevassed glaciers, raging torrents and waterfalls." It happened to be the warmest of arctic summer weather, and Payer related that the sailors, overcome by the heat, fell into a lethargic sleep, from which it was difficult to arouse them. Payer named the pyramidal mountain rising near its western end Mount Petermann, and it has long been supposed to be the highest mountain in Greenland. His first determination of its heights was 14,000 feet, but his later survey gave 12,406 feet. As it rises from sea level its whole height comes into view, and it is, of course, a very impressive object from the water.

But Payer made a fatal blunder in his calculations. As he stood on Payer point, far to the east, he took the angle to the top of the mountain and estimated the distance to the mountain top. This estimate was very erroneous, and the result was that his determination of the height was greatly exaggerated. These facts were discovered by Dr. Nathorst last year; and, according to this high authority the height of the summit is between 8,300 and 9,000 feet above the sea level. Thus the mountain can no longer be called the highest mountain in Greenland, though its height is not yet exactly determined; and this natural monument to the great explorer is not quite so conspicuous as it was thought to be.

But the other case is worse yet, for the supposed bit of earth that was also named by Payer after the geographer cannot be found, and, in fact, does not exist. The official report of the duke of Abruzzi, on his explorations of Franz-Josef Land, confirms the fact, hitherto suspected, that King Oscar Land and Petermann Land do not exist. In the spring of 1874 Payer stood on Cape Fligely, which long remained the highest land ever attained in the old world. To the far west and north he saw what he thought were blue mountain ranges, indicating masses of land. He named those to the west King Oscar Land and those to the north Petermann Land. There is nothing to do now but to expunge them from the maps. Similar blunders have more than once been made in polar lands. Probably the deceptive appearances that Payer saw were nothing more than lines of icebergs.

HUMOROUS.

Druggist—"Pills, my young man?" Young Man—"Yes'm." Druggist—"Anti-billous?" Young Man—"No; uncle."—Yale Record.

"That is an unusually fast boat." "What! That old tub?" "Yes. Don't you see it tied to those iron rings with a wire rope?"—The War Cry.

"Gen. Buttons is a brave man. He has been through two wars." "Yes; and yesterday I heard him tell his wife she didn't know what she was talking about."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

"Say, Pa!" "Um-m?" "Where does a mermaid keep her comb and little-looking-glass when she isn't using them?"—Indianapolis News.

Hetty—"I think Tom loves me with all his heart. Why, he actually threatened to shoot himself if I did not look upon him with favor." Bertha—"How like Tom! That's what he always says. Funny, isn't it?"—Boston Transcript.

"They tell me old Orchid died of a broken heart." "Yes; he spent 15 years trying to find a chrysanthemum that looked like its picture in the floral catalogue, and finally realized that he sought the impossible. The blow was fatal."—Omaha World-Herald.

Witherby—"Now, my dear, I shall be perfectly candid with you. I am going down to the club to-night to play poker and have a high old time." Mrs. Witherby—"That's just like a man! You might at least have led me to suppose you were innocent."—Boston Gazette.

Proved Conclusively.—"What! Fishing on the Sabbath?" exclaimed the clergyman, reprovingly. "Don't you know that little boys who fish on the Sabbath go to the bad place?" "I guess dat's right," replied the bad boy, disgustedly. "I couldn't 'a' struck no worse place dan dis."—Philadelphia Press.

SPECTACLES FOR SOLDIERS.

England Forbids Them, and Scouts Cannot Tell Cavalry from Cattle.

The following interesting anecdote is sent by one of my readers apropos of the remarks in last week's Truth on spectacles in the army, says London Truth:

"A few years ago at some foreign maneuvers I spent an afternoon on the outpost line with an officer of a crack British regiment. Pointing to some fields about 1,000 yards away, he said: 'There are some cavalry among the trees. I wonder whether they are scouts from the other side.' I pointed out to him that the supposed cavalry were really cattle. Although short-sighted, I have good sight even for long distances, thanks to a properly-selected pair of pince-nez spectacles. My officer friend used his field glass and admitted his mistake, adding: 'I am short-sighted. It is a great nuisance. One cannot always be using field glasses.' I suggested that he might use spectacles, as I did. 'I would, gladly,' he replied, 'but there is such a prejudice against them in the service.' Just imagine this cavalry officer sent out scouting, and going about his work half blind because of the prejudice against spectacles of officers! I could name men on active service in Africa at the present moment who are very short-sighted, but dare not wear glasses. Some of them wear single eyeglasses to the great damage of what sight they still have. Yet last year in Germany, at the imperial maneuvers, I saw plenty of officers in spectacles, and a good many privates as well."

I regard this as one of the most conspicuous instances of wooden-headed stupidity with which our army is governed. Another which deserves to be bracketed with it is the exclusion of men from the army because they happen to have false teeth. If there is to be a new regime worth anything in Pall Mall, these are among the many absurdities which will at once be got rid of.

The correspondent I have just quoted states, on the authority of Mr. Conan Doyle's book that the redoubtable De Wet actually goes about in blue spectacles, owing to some eye trouble. If this is true, it is indeed one of the object lessons of the war. How many of the British officers, whose eyes were scientifically tested before they received their commissions, can see as far as the blue-spectacled De Wet?

My last week's remarks about spectacles in the army were delivered apropos of the grant of a commission to a city imperial volunteer who was said to be shortsighted. It was suggested at the same time that the volunteer in question had been originally rejected on medical grounds, but subsequently passed, through the exertions of influential relatives. This suggestion, however, appears to have been unfounded. I am told that no C. I. V. who has gained a commission was ever objected to by the medical examiners.

Her Excuse.

Clara—What is your idea in being engaged to a man old enough to be your father?

Maud—I didn't know but I would marry him.—Indianapolis News.

A Clever Trick.

Changing one's mind is often a very clever trick.—Chicago Daily News.